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Four major King-led Homeland Security measures to become law

Port Security, Border Fence, FEMA reform and Chemical Plant Security passed by Congress

Washington, D.C. (Saturday, September 30, 2006)—Over the course of the last 24 hours, Congress has enacted four major homeland security initiatives; and in each case, legislative efforts were led by U.S. Rep. Peter T. King (R-NY), Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security.

“Congressman King has been a great ally in the effort to protect our nation from terrorist attacks,” said Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), Chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Reform. “By securing the passage of such historic legislation as port security, chemical plant security and FEMA reform, Pete King has achieved more in just one year as Homeland Security Chairman than most members of Congress do in a lifetime.”

The measures, which will now be sent to President Bush to be signed into law, include the Secure Fence Act of 2006, the Security and Accountability for Every (SAFE) Port Act, Chemical Plant Security legislation, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reform.

“This truly is a milestone in our mission to better secure the homeland,” King said. “The American people demanded that Congress enact tough, no-nonsense homeland security legislation, and that is exactly what we have done. Thanks to these measures, our national defense will be significantly stronger in four key areas—border security, port security, chemical plant security, and disaster response.”

H.R. 4954, the SAFE Port Act, will serve to enhance port security nationwide, authorizing \$400 million per year for port security grants, fully authorizing and codifying the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO), and requiring the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deploy nuclear and radiological detection systems to cover 98% of all incoming cargo. The bill also establishes three pilot programs to evaluate the feasibility of conducting 100% scanning of cargo containers for nuclear and radiological material at foreign seaports.

The Secure Fence Act of 2006, H.R. 6061, is an emergency measure that will mandate operational control of all borders through enhanced Border Patrol operations, physical barriers,

and state-of-the-art technology. This includes providing for over 700 miles of two-layered reinforced fencing along the southwest border.

“I’ve never seen the American people as adamant about any two issues as they have been about border security and port security,” King said. “The correspondence I’ve received—letters, calls, and e-mails—has been overwhelming. And I’m happy to say that we acted in accordance with those requests by enacting these two comprehensive measures into law.”

The Chemical Plant Security language, passed as part of the Fiscal Year 2007 DHS Appropriations bill, provides DHS with the authority to regulate security at our nation’s high-risk chemical security plants. The measure directs DHS to establish risk and performance-based standards for chemical facilities; requires chemical plants to conduct vulnerability assessments and create and implement site security plans based on their specific vulnerabilities; and gives DHS the authority to require compliance, including shut-down authority.

Federal Emergency Management Agency reform, also enacted as part of the Fiscal Year 2007 DHS Appropriations bill, will elevate the standing of FEMA within DHS by promoting the Administrator of FEMA to the level of Deputy Secretary and granting the agency Coast Guard-like autonomy within the Department. Furthermore, it requires that the Administrator be an experienced emergency manager, and takes steps to improve disaster preparedness and response capabilities nationwide, enhance communication and coordination at the federal, state, and local levels, and eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse.

“I’d like to thank my House and Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their hard work on these initiatives,” King said. “I believe these four measures show how dedicated this Committee and this Congress are to enacting legislation that will better protect our country and its citizens. It is quite an achievement, and I’m very proud to have had an active role in it.”

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